

## REPORT ON INFORMATION COLLECTED CONCERNING APPLICANT

Under section 60835 of title 2 of the California Code of Regulations, the Bureau of State Audits is responsible for collecting information concerning applicants for the Citizens Redistricting Commission that is needed by the Applicant Review Panel to perform its responsibilities. This is a report by Bureau staff in compliance with that responsibility.

Name of Applicant: Evelyn M. Volpa.

Information: In Applicant's second and fourth essay answers on her supplemental application, Applicant stated that as a member of the Board of Trustee for the Pajaro Valley Unified School District (PVUSD), she was involved in making decisions about how to re-draw the constituent areas that elected each of the trustees and that each of the trustees represented. Applicant served as a member of the PVUSD from 1998 through 2006. Bureau staff asked Applicant to provide more information describing the re-drawing process. Applicant stated that the re-drawing took place prior to the 2002 election of trustees. PVUSD hired an attorney to lead the process. Applicant stated there was very little reaction to the way the constituent areas were re-drawn because there was very little public interest in the process.

Applicant served on the PVUSD Board of Trustees for two four-year terms, and served as its President for one year in 1999. Staff research revealed that while Applicant was a trustee, the school district had to deal with several controversial issues. These issues included: whether to name schools after Cesar Chavez and Delores Huerta; whether to provide a school holiday for Cesar Chavez' birthday; whether to split the PVUSD into two districts; and whether to deny diplomas to students who failed to pass their exit exams. Regarding the school naming issue, Applicant felt that "it wasn't the right thing to do" because it created so much controversy, with many farm workers and United Farm Workers members even opposing the proposal. Regarding a holiday for Cesar Chavez' birthday, Applicant stated that her research indicated Cesar Chavez cherished education, so she felt the best way to honor him was to have the students attend school to learn about him. As for splitting the PVUSD into two districts, she favored the idea because she thought it "made sense geographically." Regarding denying diplomas to students who failed to pass their exit exams, Applicant favored the proposal because she believed a high school diploma is an honor that it should be earned rather than given. She explained that students were allowed six opportunities to pass the exam, and data showed that the students who did not pass the exam did not avail themselves of the PVUSD's programs to help them pass.

On June 11, 2010, Applicant submitted an amendment to her supplemental application to disclose that she had a new employer - AFS-USA. Staff asked Applicant for more information about this employer. Applicant replied that "AFS" stands for American Field Service. It is a nonprofit organization related to student exchange. According to its website, AFS is an international, voluntary, non-governmental, non-profit organization that provides intercultural learning opportunities to help people develop the knowledge, skills, and understanding needed to create a more just and peaceful world.

Bureau staff contacted Christine Quinn, the author of one of Applicant's letters of recommendation, to confirm the information provided in the letter and receive any additional information that may be relevant. Ms. Quinn confirmed the information in the letter and added that Applicant is a good mediator with great people skills. She noted that Applicant is able to calm a crowd when emotions are running high, and she provides the "voice of reason." Staff asked Ms. Quinn about Applicant's participation in the decision regarding naming a high school after Cesar Chavez. Ms. Quinn stated it was an emotional topic for people but Applicant, as a district trustee, maintained the decision should be based on the district's criteria, not on the feelings of those involved. The PVUSD's stance at the time was not to name schools after people, and Applicant stood firm on upholding the existing rules of the PVUSD.

Recommendation: None.

Name and title of person submitting response: Steven Benito Russo, Chief of Investigations

Report Date: September 18, 2010